

OUR THEATRICAL POPULATION.

Its Rank and Division—The Education and the Work of Actors—Life Behind the Scenes—Salaries, Expenses, Numbers and Distribution—Gossip About Rich Actors and Actresses—Curious and Complete Statistics.

Although it may seem a contradiction in terms, yet it is nevertheless true that the things most familiar are generally the things least known, and that wherever a general acquaintance with a subject exists, there is to be found but little reliable or accurate knowledge. These remarks are especially applicable to that portion of our population who are engaged directly or indirectly in theatrical pursuits. Actors and actresses are in everybody's mouth and in everybody's eyes; and yet not one in fifty really understands their life, their business, their pecuniary or numerical status, and the various points in reference to them or their occupation which would occur to a thoughtful mind.

One star differs from another star in glory, and the theatrical population of the metropolis comprises seven ranks or grades (of which, however, only four are professionally regarded as strictly theatrical). The operatic artists, as receiving the highest compensations and catering for the most fashionable portion of our citizens, occupy the first rank. Then come the performers at the Broadway theatres; then those at the theatres on the east side of town; then the minstrels and miscellaneous performers; next the circus performers; and, the corps de ballet; and, lastly, we have the numerous scenic artists, carpenters, musicians, and other non-performing attaches of the various theatres. These grades are not always definitely defined. Still they possess, to a greater or less degree, a real existence. The operatic artists and their humble companions in the minstrel walks of life, as well as the circus troupes, are included in this enumeration more for the sake of completeness than exactness, for, as they are not technically considered "theatrical," they do not require to be particularly noticed at present, but must make room for a more detailed description of the remaining grades.

TECHNICAL DIVISIONS—WHAT IT TAKES TO ORGANIZE A THEATRICAL COMPANY.

Few people outside of the profession have any idea of the minute yet definite degree to which division and sub-division are carried among the members of a theatrical company. A glance at the organization of a Broadway establishment will enable our readers to comprehend this point. The manager, proprietor, or lessee is generally the figure-head, who receives the profits or bears the losses; but the power behind the throne, who does the responsible work, is known as the business manager. This gentleman makes the engagements, attends to the finances, directs the printing and newspaper work, hires and hires the Bohemians when he thinks it worth while, writes the play-bills, controls the salaries, settles all disputes, and sometimes even casts the pieces, though this latter function generally devolves on the stage manager, who also attends and directs rehearsals, notices of which are always posted on an appropriate bulletin behind the scenes. The chief member of the acting stock company is known as leading man; next in status is the first old man; then ranks the first comedy; then comes the eccentric, who enacts such parts as "Dazzle," in London Assurance; then follows the first heavy man or villain; while after this unfortunate individual, who is obliged to sin nightly for a trifling compensation, come in their order the first walking gentleman, the second old man, the second comedy, the second walking gentleman, and those two minor walking gentlemen of utility called the general utility and utility. Having disposed of the males, the female artists next demand attention. In this department we find first a leading lady; then a first old woman; then ranks the soubrette, the most saucy and piquant of roles; then come the second old woman, the first and second walking ladies, and the second soubrette, while the list is completed by the women of "utility." In the third division are placed the scantly-dressed, light, and airy corps de ballet and "the noble army of martyrs," theatrically speaking, known as the supers, called in Bowery parlance "sups." Next come the "attaching" members, members embracing the prompters; the call-boy, the scenic artist, the paint grinder, master carpenter, second hand, the "flat" men, "wing" men, and "fly" men (so called from their respective positions), the property man, who makes and has charge of the accoutrements, the property boy, the stage cleaners, the gas man, the stage door man (the Cerberus who guards the hallowed entrance to the stage, and who is nightly beset by applications for admission from the gay youths of the metropolis), the night watchman, the day watchman, and the costumer, dresser and assistants, who guard the "ward-robies."

THE COMPENSATION OF ACTORS—FULL AND COMPLETE LIST OF THE AVERAGE SALARIES OF THEATRICAL PERFORMERS.

There is this peculiarity in the pecuniary rewards of theatrical people—the successful actors receive a compensation oftentimes far in excess of their industry or talent, while the hard-working members of the profession are in proportion underpaid. As a rule members of the stock company are more adequately rewarded than where the star system prevails, because in the latter case the star absorbs the major portion of the receipts, and a lower grade of talent among the stock is permitted. As a rule, also, performers on Broadway receive higher salaries than those on the Bowery. Each theatre has its own scale of salaries, but the subjoined table, compiled from reliable sources, with great care, exhibits the average compensations of professionals of all classes in this city at the present time.

Business managers receive a salary and a percentage of profits, amounting in all to \$5000 per annum and upwards. Stage managers receive from \$50 to \$75 per week; the leading man from \$50 to \$100 per week. The first old man receives his aged heart with from \$50 to \$75 weekly, the first comedy laughs for a similar compensation; the eccentric receives weekly from \$30 to \$50; the first heavy man or villain, stains his soul for \$40, \$50, or \$60; the first walking gentleman receives from \$25 to \$35; the second old man from \$20 to \$30; the second comedy from \$18 to \$25; the second walking gentleman from \$15 to \$25; the male utilities from \$12 to \$15.

The leading lady and the first old woman receive about the same compensation as their male equivalents; the soubrette earns from \$30 to \$50 weekly; the second soubrette is entitled to about half that sum; the walking ladies receive from \$18 to \$35, while the balance of the actresses are made happy on smaller amounts. The ballet girls exhibit such charms as they may possess for \$8 or \$10 per six nights; while the magnificent supers throw themselves away for thirty-seven cents a performance.

The prompter receives weekly from \$20 to \$25; the call-boy from \$6 to \$8; the scenic artist, according to ability, from \$25 per week to \$5000 per annum; the master carpenter is entitled to about \$50 weekly; the property man to about \$25; the costumer's compensation varies from \$25 to \$40 weekly; the treasurer's from \$20 to \$30; the leader of the orchestra from \$35 to \$50; the second leader from \$20 to \$25; the musicians receive \$17 per week; and the doorkeepers generally \$1 per night. Some theatres, as the Broadway, pay their doorkeepers higher rates, and the number of "free admissions" is found to be wonderfully lessened in consequence.

EXPENSES, WARDROBES, ETC.

The wardrobe of an actor is a heavy tax upon his purse. Stars, of course, furnish their own wardrobes, but those of a stock company are generally supplied by the theatre. Every member, however, is obliged to find his own "trappings," as they are called, such as swords, buckles, shoes, feathers, stockings, tights, gloves, and shoes. About fifteen average look pages in all. The Bowery actors are the most severely worked, as the pieces are constantly changed; but, on the other hand, the same absolute correctness

of text is not demanded from them as from a Broadway performer. For a hundred nights on spectacle may run, and then, indeed, is the winter Broadway; and then, indeed, is the winter of the actor's discontent made glorious summer.

MEMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION—NOVEL STATISTICS.

It is exceedingly difficult to obtain any even approximate numerical data relative to such a constantly shifting and decidedly untheatrical portion of our citizens as the theatrical population. But the subjoined estimates have been carefully compiled, and will be found in the main correct. An average metropolitan theatre employs, directly and indirectly, about one hundred and twenty-five persons. As there are now nine theatres in full blast (the Winter Garden and the New Bowery having been destroyed), the total number of employes will reach 1125. This is exclusive of the Academy of Music, which employs about a hundred, and fifty people; also exclusive of the minstrel halls, each of which furnishes work for about forty people, the concert saloons, etc. Niblo's employes about the same number of people as the Academy, while the New York Theatre and the new burlesque theatre employ, of course, less than the average number. Altogether, the number of theatrical people, using the term in the fullest sense, in the metropolis, will exceed two thousand.

Although the stock performer "enjoys" a plentiful supply of labor, and "felicitates" himself or herself on a corresponding deficiency of funds, yet the successful "stars" shine surrounded with all the brilliancy of wealth and luxury. And the majority of this luxury and wealth has been derived from New York, or from the prestige which the approval of New York affords throughout the provinces. Mr. Barney Williams, who commenced life as a printer's devil in this city, is now worth \$400,000, invested chiefly in real estate. He resides in elegant style on Thirty-eighth street, near Murray Hill, boasts a picture gallery and a collection of imported stables, keeps five carriages and any number of horses, sports servants in livery, and owns a superb country residence near Bath.

Edwin Forrest is worth at least \$500,000, owns a magnificent residence corner of Broad and Master streets, Philadelphia, a summer residence near Chestnut Hill, and is the possessor of several valuable paintings, and, above all, delights in the ownership of perhaps the finest Shakespearean library in the country—a library, too, carefully and daily studied by the great tragedian, who, despite his eminence, does not regard himself above the necessity of improvement. "Solon Shingle" Owens, worth \$300,000 (the major portion of which he made in this city), has purchased a beautiful place near Baltimore. "Brother Sam" Chauncey rejoices in the neat sum of \$100,000; Edwin Booth owns about the same sum, and is perhaps entitled justly to more; "Rip Van Winkle" Jefferson, now delirious, is estimated pecuniarily at the same figure; Florence maintains his "caste" in society on about the same amount; while William Wheatley and Lester Wallack are in comfortable circumstances. Actresses, as a class, have not been so pecuniarily fortunate as their male rivals. Still, Charlotte Cushman has earned professionally at least a quarter of a million, while Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Miss Lucille Weston, and others of note, have acquired a competence, and something beyond. Miss Maggie Mitchell, in every sense of the word a New York favorite, has also accumulated a handsome residence and a hundred thousand dollars. So, after all, "the theatrical life has its roses for those who have the talent and pluck to seek and the luck to find them. Mr. Forrest receives \$500 per night for his performances; Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams demand a similar sum; others receive smaller amounts, or a percentage of the nightly receipts; others occasionally control the receipts themselves; but whatever be the contract or arrangement, there is "money in it," as the facts just stated show.

HAUNTS AND HABITS—AGENCIES AND AGENTS.

The New York actor has his favorite haunts, and these are generally of a convivial character; for the actor is emphatically a social animal. The House of Lords and the De Soto, on the central cross street near Broadway, are noted resorts, and the bar-room of the Metropolitan Hotel has become an "exchange." At this latter haunt, about noon, may be seen nearly all the leading male professionals in the metropolis; the entrances of theatres and Broadway in general are also favorite spots for theatrical reunions.

Among the actors' resorts must also be included those institutions known as dramatic agencies. These agencies are designed to facilitate business intercourse between actors and managers, and are often useful, though in certain cases they have been found to be of "doubtful" character. There are now three principal agencies, one under the control of two young actors, who have established branch houses abroad; another managed by a well-known professional, and the third more particularly designed for the members of circus companies and generally. The pecuniary class of men known as "agents" in the theatrical parlance deserve in this connection a few words. The "agent" is generally the business manager of the "star," or else serves as his "man of all work." He makes engagements for his principal, controls the advertisements, endeavors to procure notices, directs the ticket system, oversees the printing and distribution of the posters, etc., represents his principal at the treasury, counts the house nightly, "treats" the so-called "critics," often dictates their "high-toned" criticisms, issues "passes," originates "the dodges," and does the (theatrical) "chores" generally.

For these varied services he receives anywhere from \$25 to \$100 per week, or a percentage of the profits. Some of these agents, as those who act for Barney Williams, Edwin Forrest, Mr. Florence, John E. Owens, and other well known names, are men of talent, character, and means; but not a few so-called "agents" are simply hungry Bohemians, who do an actor's dirty work for a paltry compensation, and bring the profession and themselves into discredit.

THE THEATRES OF NEW YORK—GENERAL ESTIMATES.

That the theatres of the metropolis accommodate thousands of spectators; that they represent a heavy investment of capital, and that they weekly receive and weekly expend large sums of money, will be readily grasped. To illustrate these statements is the object of this article, complete, and to enable the reader to form a vivid and yet sufficiently correct idea of these points, we have prepared the following approximate exhibit:—

The leading places of metropolitan amusement will accommodate, when full, about 24,000 people. This estimate includes the opera house, the leading minstrel halls, the museums and the circus, as well as all the theatres. The aggregate directly invested in these establishments reaches nearly \$2,000,000. About the season to be an exceedingly prosperous one, while some idea of the expenses of these establishments can be derived from the following:—The direct professional expenses

of the Broadway Theatre nightly are, on the average, \$400; of Niblo's, about \$650; of the Bowers Theatre, about \$500; of the Olympic, about \$400; of the Academy of Music, \$1000, taken the year round, and other places in like proportion. This estimate must be taken cum grano salis, as all general estimates involving calculations of such magnitude must be. Still it will be found useful in affording some conception of the pecuniary status of theatricals in our midst.

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

The morale of the theatrical profession is not strictly a subject of newspaper discussion, being more in place in an essay than an article. It is simple justice to state, however, that although some actors are drunkards, and some actresses are even worse, yet the great body of the profession are men and women whose lives and whose morals will bear favorable comparison with any class in the community. It is the misfortune of theatrical people that being, as it were, in one sense of the term, "lights set upon a hill," they "cannot be hid," and their follies and indiscretions find ready talebearers. Let other men and other women would be equally scandalized if they occupied the same position in the public eye. There was a time when actors and actresses deserved the major part of the censures hurled against them; but those days are over, let us trust forever.

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No. 11 SOUTH FOURTH STREET, INCORPORATED 1855—CHARTER PERPETUAL—No. 11 SOUTH FOURTH STREET, CAPITAL, \$1,000,000 PAID IN.

Insurance on Lives, by